

STANFORD UNIVERSITY
MEDICAL CENTER
PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA

DEPARTMENT OF GENETICS
School of Medicine

1961.

not sent

Dr. J. E. Wallace Sterling
President
Stanford University
Stanford, California

Dear Wally:

I trust you had a pleasant trip, if only to contemplate the quiet life to which you will now be returning.

I have not been here very long and perhaps am not enough a veteran to justify the following remarks; on the other hand, you will not then accuse me of an unworldly nostalgia for times too long past.

I am deeply disturbed and disappointed at the progressive erosion of one of Stanford's unique assets: the simplicity of its administration and the tempering of its bureaucracy to academic needs. Hardly a day passes now that does not bring some new sign of the ascendancy of bureaucratic thinking and control, and the promulgation of rules and regulations that are going to make office managers and salesmen of your executives and professors. The general planning for the Medical School, the choice of contractors, the traffic arrangements, even such nonsense as the enclosed personnel questionnaires are recurrent symptoms; some aspects of the faculty housing administration are equally typical of this dangerous disease. And I can say the present equilibrium is only the result of a constant battle which has required considerable time for the defeat or evasion of harassments.

Let me hasten to add that the Medical School administration itself has had a commendable record, most of its lapses being in emulation of or in response to directives of the University administration. I should also add that it is not so easy to document the situation with specific grievances as it is to sense a noticeable change of spirit even during the brief period of my residence here. I do know that many of our colleagues share this gloomy view.

The present situation is far from desperate but the seeds of despair are here and it is possible to visualize the transformation of Stanford into another Berkeley (could I use stronger language?). If the situation can still be controlled at all, only you can exercise the leadership needed to maintain the

Sterling, J. E. W.

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dignity, autonomy and energy of your faculty. You should know that one question is asked of every intended step: whose benefit is this for, and that you would be content with the answer.

Some of our colleagues and associates would consider a letter like this mere trouble-making. However, I believe it would be a far greater disservice to the ideals of the University not to bring such an important potential threat to your attention while there is still hope of dealing with it. This letter, I should be quick to remember, does not do justice to the devoted efforts of many academic civil servants who are a credit to the University, for whose unstinting help we must be grateful. Nor should it impugn the motives of others whose main intention may indeed be the efficiency of management.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

JL/jh

cc: Dean Alway
Dr. Arthur Kornberg
Dr. Avram Goldstein
Dr. Clifford Grobstein